



Photos by Senior Airman Mike Muhleisen and Staff Sgt. Molly A. Gilliam

Top, Members of the 547th Intelligence Squadron sand the wing of the MiG-29C Fulcrum during its restoration process at the Threat Training Facility. Here the nose cone is off during the restoration. Right, the restored aircraft. Inset, the cockpit of the MiG-29 closely resembles the F-4-era aircraft. The aircraft has no heads-up display, and 20 to 30-year-old technology throughout. But, it is a popular aircraft around the world because of its low cost, armament and maneuverability. As a close air-support aircraft, it is deadly.



Restored MiG-29 Fulcrum ready for public viewing

By Staff Sgt. Jim Bianchi
AWFC Public Affairs

When the former Soviet Union fell, more than a dozen new countries were born overnight. Many of these countries were in possession of advanced Soviet-made military equipment the West had seen little of, and less-than-friendly countries wanted to buy.

Moldavia found themselves in possession of 22 MiG-29C Fulcrum.

“The Moldavians were unable to afford the up-keep on such an advanced aircraft so consequently they put their 20-plus Fulcrums up for sale,” said Lt. Col. John Sowdon, 547th Intelligence Squadron commander. “The United States government bought them to keep them off the (black) market.”

As soon as Lt. Col. Sowdon found out about the aircraft he started the process of acquiring one for Nellis.

“I really wanted one of the MiG’s for the Threat Training Facility,” said Lt. Col. Sowdon. “It would be a valuable training tool here.”

The TTF is the only hands-on facility in the Air Force where pilots and support personnel can come look at, climb on and develop an understanding for the current military equipment being used by potential adversaries around the world.

In addition to aircraft, the facility also displays rifles, tanks and missiles for everyone to learn from.

Once the Fulcrum was brought to Nellis in October of 1999, the aircraft underwent a three month restoration before it could be placed on display at TTF.

“When the Moldavians got the aircraft, they just used green and gray spray paint to cover the Russian markings,” said Lt. Col. Sowdon. “When the paint was removed, a Russian badge was uncovered. It was from an elite Soviet unit.”

From the markings and other information, it was determined what airfield the MiG-29 was stationed at, said Lt. Col. Sowdon.

Before the refurbishing got underway other base agencies had to be involved.

“To restore the aircraft my threat systems maintenance personnel worked very closely with

the Fire Department, Safety and Bioengineering to ensure the refurbishing was done right,” said Lt. Col. Sowdon.

Upon close inspection, the aircraft looks like an F-15 with an F-16 nose welded on.

The cockpit doesn’t have a heads-up display, or any advanced avionics. The aircraft is also not capable of air refueling.

“But it does get the job done,” said Lt. Col. Sowdon.

Another problem is spare parts. According to Lt. Col. Sowdon, no two aircraft are the same. All parts must be custom or semi-custom made to fit each aircraft.

“A piece of sheet metal from one aircraft won’t fit another. All the screw holes must be re-drilled to match the new aircraft,” said Lt. Col. Sowdon. “In war time this could be a real problem.”

When members of the German Air Force were here in October for Red Flag, they flew MiG-29A’s. While here they took the time to compare our MiG-29C to their MiG-29As. According to Lt. Col. Sowdon, their help was invaluable.

“When they first saw our MiG they were

shocked at the (bad) condition,” said Lt. Col. Sowdon. “They had a special tool we needed to open the canopy and provided us first hand information on other aspects of the aircraft.”

Without the Germans extensive knowledge and experience with the aircraft, the finished aircraft now on display might not have looked as good, said Lt. Col. Sowdon.

According to Airman 1st Class Courtney Mock, intelligence apprentice with the 547th IS, this is the most advanced fourth-generation aircraft on display at the TTF, but it’s still no match for the F-16 or F-15.

“Without the extensive efforts and knowledge of the 547th IS members, Nellis base agencies and the German Air Force personnel the finished aircraft now on display would not have looked as good as it does,” said Lt. Col. Sowdon.

To view this unique aircraft, Soviet-made tanks, Cold War relics and current weapons from around the world, visit the TTF, Mondays through Fridays 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or call 652-5119. To schedule a one-hour guided tour for groups of 10 or more, call 652-7846 or 652-2051



MiG-29 multi-role fighter facts:

Introduced:	1977 in the Soviet Union	Crew:	1 pilot	Wing span:	37 feet 3 inches
Engines:	2D-33 afterburning turbo fans each with 18,300 pounds of thrust.	Speed:	1,520 m.p.h.	Weapons:	1 30mm cannon with 150 rounds, plus 6,614 pound of missiles, rockets, bombs and external munitions.
Range:	1,300 miles, however not air refuelable	Length:	56 feet 10 inches		
Ceiling Max.:	55,775 feet				

source: www.users.skynet.be/sky93454/mig29